



King County

**Department of
Community and Human Services**

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King County announces 2009 Exemplary Service Award honorees; unveils winning Mental Health Recovery Poster

KING COUNTY – Members of the mental health and substance abuse communities will come together on Thursday, October 08, 2009 to honor and recognize the recipients of the 2009 Exemplary Service Awards and formally unveil and launch the winning poster design from the first ever King County Mental Health Recovery Poster Design Contest. Local artist Renee Klaus Pond provided the artwork for the winning poster celebrating the core concepts of recovery.

The celebration will take place at St. Mark's Episcopal Cathedral, Bloedel Hall, 1245 10th Avenue East in Seattle from 5-7 p.m.

To foster greater understanding and awareness of the goals and principles of mental health recovery, the county sponsored a poster design contest earlier this year, open to all consumers of mental health services in King County. The poster design contest was an opportunity to get people talking and thinking about recovery. King County formally embraced the concepts of recovery through the adoption of an ordinance in November 2006 mandating that the county's publicly funded mental health system transform to one that supports the recovery of people participating in our mental health services.

Contest entries were to follow the theme of the fundamental components of recovery: respect, responsibility, hope and resilience, self direction, individualized, person centered, empowerment, holistic, non-linear, peer support, and strengths-based. A total of 32 poster submittals were received, all of them created by clients of the mental health system. The winning artist, Renee Klaus Pond, created a strikingly beautiful and colorful design incorporating all of the core concepts of recovery.

In her remarks about her submission, Ms. Pond wrote that "the colors are intense and bright because the process for recovery is just that...intense but bright, hopeful." The official unveiling kicks off wide distribution of the poster in the community as a way of sharing the news that treatment works and recovery from mental illness is absolutely possible.

The Exemplary Service Awards, now in the 11th year, recognize exceptional leadership and achievement in service provision and advocacy on behalf of persons with mental illness and alcohol/drug dependency. Individuals were nominated by the community for recognition in four established categories and selected by a review committee to receive awards. A special award is being given this year to Mark Dalton, administrator for the Belltown Community Service Office, Department of Social and Health Services in recognition of his 35 years of service to low-income people and individuals and families with disabilities.

The Exemplary Service Award honorees for 2009 are:

Advocacy: Terry Vispo, Consejo Counseling and Referral. Terry has been a strong advocate working to ensure that the Latino community receives culturally and linguistically competent services that are based on recovery principles, utilize best practices, and that address substance abuse and mental health issues in an integrated, wellness-based manner. She was the pioneer and organizer of the annual Latino Behavioral Health Conference, which provides information about effective and culturally responsive practices that address the disparities and needs facing the Latino community in Washington state.

Direct Service: Inpatient Chemical Dependency Program, Ryther Child Center. This program has continued to serve boys ages 12-17 despite budget reductions at Ryther that resulted in a similar program for girls closing down. The program was redesigned and reenergized, adding nutrition, exercise and science programs focused on helping the boys learn how to be healthy. Treatment completion and success rates rose significantly as a result of the team's dedication and hard work.

Service Innovation: REACH Program, Evergreen Treatment Services. The REACH Program has been providing outreach and case-management to chronically homeless, chemically dependent adults for 13 years. They have served many of the most difficult to engage clients in King County and have been highly successful in engaging clients, working collaboratively with many other service providers and finding creative ways to overcome barriers to benefit the people they serve.

System Integration: Peer Support Services, Harborview Medical Center. Peer Support Services have expanded to become an integral part of many programs at Harborview, including supported employment and housing, dialectical behavior therapy, assertive community treatment, long term rehabilitation, crisis intervention, addictions, and primary medical and psychiatric care teams. In the words of one Harborview client, "My experience with the peer support team has made me feel less distance between staff and clients and given me a greater sense of hope for a productive life."

Special Director's Award: Mark Dalton, Administrator, Belltown Community Service Office, Department of Social and Health Services. For 35 years, Mark Dalton has found ways to help people with mental illness and other disabilities access the federal benefits they are entitled to receive. His advocacy has helped thousands of individuals move from homelessness and repeated incarcerations into permanent supported housing and stability in the community.

For more information on the Exemplary Service Awards or the Recovery Poster Design Contest, call Sherry Hamilton at 206-263-9010.